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Message Text

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60
ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-20 EB-11 SWF-02 CIAE-00 COME-00

INR-10 LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 AID-20 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 L-03 NSC-07 PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DRC-01 EUR-25 /181 W
---------- 025886
R 022040Z APR 74
FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7122
INFO AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BRIDGETOWN 0788

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB PINT BB
SUBJ: WALCOTT ANNOUNCES SUGAR SETTLEMENT, BLASTS GOB

REFS: BRIDGETOWN 052 AND 750

SUMMARY: IN MAJOR ADDRESS BEFORE CROWD OF SEVERAL THOUSAND WORKERS AT ANNUAL MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS, BWU GENSEC FRANK WALCOTT ANNOUNCED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH SUGAR INDUSTRY HAD PRODUCED SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN WAGES OF BARBADOS' 10,000 SUGAR INDUSTRY WORKERS. MAJOR PORTION OF WALCOTT'S ONE HOUR ADDRESS DEVOTED TO SEARING CRITICISM OF PM ERROL BARROW AND RULING DLP. THOUGH ISSUES TOUCHED WERE NOT NEW, HEAT OF WALCOTT'S ATTACK LEFT NO DOUBT THAT RIFT BETWEEN BWU AND DLP HAS WIDENED. WHILE STATING THAT BWU MIGHT BE FORCED TO RECONSIDER ITS SUPPORT FOR DLP, WALCOTT STOPPED WELL SHORT OF SEVERING UNION'S CURRENT POLITICAL TIES. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING ANNUAL MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS, BARBADOS WORKERS' UNION GENSEC FRANK WALCOTT ANNOUNCED THAT UNION HAD LAST WEEK CON-
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CLUDED WAGE NEGOTIATIONS ON BEHALF OF BARBADOS' 10,000 SUGAR

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WORKERS. WALCOTT DESCRIBED SETTLEMENT AS BIGGEST CONTRACT EVER OBTAINED BY SUGAR WORKERS AND SAID IT WOULD ADD BB DOLS 6 MILLION TO WORKERS' PAYCHECKS. (ACCORDING TO PRESS, SETTLEMENT, WHICH IS RETROACTIVE TO JANUARY 1, REPRESENTS AVERAGE WAGE INCREASE OF 43 PERCENT OVER LAST YEAR. HOURLY RATES FOR CAN CUTTERS WILL INCREASE FROM 90 CENTS TO DOLS 1.25 IN FIRST YEAR OF CONTRACT AND DOLS 1.35 IN SECOND YEAR, WHILE WORKERS WILL ALSO RECEIVE RATES OF DOLS 3.15/TON IN FIRST YEAR AND DOLS 3.30/TON IN SECOND YEAR COMPARED WITH DOLS 2.35/TON LAST YEAR.) WALCOTT SAID UNION REASONABLY SATISFIED THAT FOR FIRST TIME SUGAR WORKERS' EARNINGS WILL BE COMPARABLE TO THOSE IN OTHER SECTORS.

2. PREPONDERANCE OF WALCOTT'S MAJOR ADDRESS TO GATHERING OF SEVERAL THOUSAND WORKERS AT CELEBRATIONS WAS DEVOTED TO SEARING ATTACK AGAIYMT PM ERROL BARROW AND RULING DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY (DLP). FIRST TIME IN FOUR YEARS THAT BARROW NOT INVITED TO GIVE PRINCIPAL ADDRESS AT CELEBRATIONS. DURING HIS SPEECH WALCOTT SAID DECISION NOT TO INVITE BARROW THIS YEAR FOLLOWED BARROW'S 1973 MAY DAY SPEECH IN WHICH, ACCORDING TO WALCOTT, BARROW IMPLIED HE WAS TIRED OF BEING DRAGGED ONTO PLATFORM TO ENTERTAIN BWU'S ANNUAL GATHERINGS. WALCOTT SAID WORKERS DID NOT LOOK TO POLITICIANS FOR ENTERTAINMENT OR CONDESCENSION, AND IN VIEW OF IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING WORKERS IT WAS DECIDED TO CALL UPON SOMEONE FROM UNION'S RANKS TO GIVE THIS YEAR'S ADDRESS.

3. DISCUSSING JANUARY HOTEL STRIKE, WALCOTT SAID THAT DESPITE UNION'S AGREEMENT WITH HOTEL ASSOCIATION SEVERAL WORKERS HAVE BEEN DISMISSED AND OTHERS BEING HELD ON CRIMINAL CHARGES, FIRST TIME SINCE DISTURBANCES AND STRIKES OF 1930'S, ACCORDING TO WALCOT IHAT WORKERS HAVE BEEN THREATENED WITH JAIL SENTENCES FOR PARTICIPATING IN LABOR ACTION. WALCOTT REITERATED REMARK MADE LAST JANUARY DURING TELECAST FOLLOWING SETTLEMENT OF HOTEL STRIKE IN WHICH HE LIKENED PM BARROW TO STANLEY BALDWIN, FORMER UK PRIME MINISTER WHO PUT DOWN 1927 COAL STRIKE. WALCOTT STATED EMPHATICALLY THAT WORKERS IN BARBADOS HAD NOT STRUGGLED FOR FORTY YEARS AGAINST OPPRESSION FROM WHITE COLONIAL MASTERS ONLY BBDFACE SIMILAR OPPRESSION FROM THEIR OWN (BLACK) MINISTERS IN BARBADOS AND VOWED THAT WORKERS PREPARED TO RESIST OPPRESSION FROM WHATEVER SOURCE.

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4. WALCOTT LEVELLED WHAT HAS BY NOW BECOME FAMILIAR ATTACK AGAINST GOB'S PROPOSED LABOR RELATIONS LEGISLATION, ARGUING THAT ISSUE OF GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ONLY AROSE WHEN WORKERS FORCED TO STAND UP IN DEFENSE OF THEIR RIGHTS WHILE NONE PAID ATTENTION TO INJUSTICES THAT WORKERS SUFFERED EVERYDAY AND WHICH UNDERLAY THEIR PERIODIC AGITATIONS. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE SEEN CORRESPONDENCE WITH PM'S OFFICE REFERRING TO BARROW'S PLEDGE AFTER 1972 PORT STRIKE TO PASS LEGISLATION THAT WOULD EXEMPT

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PORT,
AIRPORT AND OTHER ESSENTIAL SERVICES FROM STRIKE ACTION, AND HE AGAIN EMPHASIZED THAT BWU WOULD NOT ACCEPT ANY LEGISLATION WHICH ATTEMPTS TO LIMIT WORKERS' "FUNDAMENTAL" RIGHTS TO ORGANIZE AND STRIKE. REMINDING HIS AUDIENCE AND THOSE POLITICIANS PRESENT THAT IT WAS WORKING CLASS VOTE THAT BROUGHT DLP TO POWER AND THAT WORKERS HAD ALWAYS BEEN IN VANGUARD OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN BARBADOS, WALCOTT SAID BWU HAD ENDORSED DLP PLATFORM BECAUSE IT BELIEVED BOTH ORGANIZATIONS SHARED SAME CONCERN FOR IMPROVING WORKERS' CONDITIONS, BUT THAT BWU WOULD WITHDRAW ITS SUPPORT IF IT FINDS INTERESTS NO LONGER COINCIDE.

5. IN APPARENT REFERENCE TO RECENT PRESS SPECULATION ABOUT HIS OWN POLITICAL FUTURE, WALCOTT STATED EMPHATICALLY THAT HE WAS NOT SEEKING TO COMPETE WITH PM BARROW ON ANY LEVEL, NOR TO REPLACE HIM IN OFFICE. IT WAS NOT HIS AMBITION, HE SAID, TO DIE A MIL-LIONAIRE BUT TO END HIS CAREER WITH KNOWLEDGE THAT BWU WAS STRONGER ORGANIZATION.

6. IN REMAINDER OF HIS RAMBLING ONE HOUR SPEECH WALCOTT (1) CHIDED CARIBBEAN LEADERS FOR ENCOURAGING REGIONAL INTERGRATION IN EVERY SPHERE EXCEPT LABOR; (2) WARNED OF THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL LABOR UNITY TO FACE THREAT POSED BY MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS, MANY OF WHOSE GROSS INCOMES EXCEEDED THE GNP'S OF MANY THIRD WORLD NATIONS AND WHICH, IN WALCOTT'S VIEW, WERE ATTEMPTING TO EXPLOIT DIVISIONS IN LABOR MOVEMENT TO PREVENT EXERCISE OF WORKERS' RIGHTS; (3) CRITICIZED GOB'S MERE BB DOLS 90,000 CONTRIBUTION TO BWU LABOR COLLEGE, TOTAL COST OF WHICH HE ESTIMATED AT BB DOLS 1.6 MILLION, WHILE SUBSIDIZING 75 PERCENT OF COST OF MANAGEMENT TRAIN-ING PROGRAMS AT BARBADOS INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY, AND (4) BLASTED GOB'S FAILURE TO UNDERTAKE NEEDED LOW INCOME HOUSING PROGRAM AND CALLED FOR GOVERNMENT TO HELP FINANCE UNION'S PLANS TO BUILD 300 HOUSING UNITS FOR WORKERS OVER NEXT THREE
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YEARS.

7. AT CONCLUSION OF WALCOTT'S ADDRESS BWU ASSISTANT SECRETARY EVELYN GREAVES READ TEXTS OF FOUR MAY DAY RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY UNION CALLING FOR GOB SUPPORT FOR LABOR COLLEGE AND HOUSING DE-VELOPMEHT, REITERATING UNION'S STAND ON LABOR RELATIONS LEGISLA-TION, AND AGIAN CALLING FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF TRI-PARTITE BODY COMPRISED OF INDUSTRY, LABOR AND GOVERNMENT TO CONSULT ON ECONO-MIC ISSUES FACING THE COUNTRY (CALL TO WHICH GOB HAS NOT PUBLICLY RESPONDED). IN CONTRAST TO TENOR OF WALCOTT'S SPEECH, RESOLUTIONS WERE MODERATELY WORDED.

8. COMMENT: THOUGH ISSUES TOUCHED ON IN WALCOTT'S ADDRESS BY NO MEANS NEW, HAVING BEEN BRUITED FOR MONTHS IN PRESS AND SMALLER PUBLIC FORA, HEAT WITH WHICH HE REPEATEDLY ATTACKED PM BARROW AND

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DLP INDICATES THAT RIFT, WHICH HAS BEEN EVIDENT FOR SOME TIME, IS BY NO MEANS NARROWING. THOUGH HIS WORDS CALCULATYD TO REDDEN A FEW EARS (AND FACES), WALCOTT DID NOT BURN ANY POLITICAL BRIDGES AND LEFT HIS FUTURE POLITICAL OPTIONS COMPLETELY OPEN. ONE GOB OFFICIAL ATTENDING CEREMONIES TOOK SOME COMFORT IN FACT THAT ONLY OTHER FIGURE TO SHARE PLATFORM WITH WALCOTT WAS BWU ASSISTANT SECRETARY EVELYN GREAVES, GENERALLY REGARDED AS NUMBER TWO MAN IN UNION HIERARCHY, WHO SAIJ TO ENJOY CLOSER AND MORE CORDIAL RE-LATIONS WITH PM BARROW AND TO BE SERVING AS A ZRIDGE BETWEEN BARROW AND WALCOTT. AFTER LEAVING PLATFORM WALCOTT PROCEEDED TO DRINK AND JOPE WITH TRADE MINISTER BRANFORD TAITT AND LABOR MINISTER PHILIP GREAVES, INDICATING THAT AVENUES FOR DISCUSSION AND COMPROMISE HAVE NOT BEEN CLOSED.
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